Government Travel Bureau People . . . **By Ginnie Beardsley**

B.C. Glad-Handers

"I LOATHE 'Be Kind to Tourists Week'," says Ernest Evans, the man responsible for more people being kind to more tourists than anyone else in B.C. "If we aren't naturally considerate, honest, and friendly, no amount of show will fool the tourist into thinking we are."

Since the end of the Second World War, the emergence of 49 states and 72 countries as active competitors in what we in B.C. were accustomed to think of as "our" tourist market has made it imperative that British Columbians augment their natural hospitality with more understanding contact with the visitor and better preparation to receive him.

Both aspects of this challenge are met by services of the B.C. Government Travel Bureau, which occupies a pleasant, converted, old house on Superior Street, next to the Douglas Building. From these offices 10 persons cope with the multitude of problems arising from the fact that tourism is growing so fast that another five years should see it established as our third industry.

With over $200,000,000 invested in guest accommodation in B.C., and a turn-over of from 7 to 12 per cent every year in those doing the investing, the fact must be faced that many come into the business with nothing more than capital and a liking for people. To help these newcomers, as well as the many well-established and skilfull tourist hosts, is the job of those in the tourist accommodation part of the travel bureau.

Ron Macdonnel, field representative, spreads himself thinly over the entire province, inspecting, classifying as to star ratings, and advising, as well as supervising the star rating offices. Since his experience in the hotel business dates back to his childhood in Scotland and includes hotel work in London, with the CPR, the Devonshire in Vancouver, and Qualicum Beach Hotel here on the Island, he is able to talk to the operators on their own terms. Invariably, his advice is welcomed.

One amusing incident Ron tells about is that of a first-class hotel where the dining room service was, to put it mildly, sloppy. The waitress wore a dirty uniform, looked as if she hadn't washed her face or combed her hair, and was completely indifferent to the mistakes she made in his order. The proprietor, asking for advice, requested Mr. Macdonnel to give a pep talk to the dining room staff. He did so, pulling no punches. Afterwards, the hotel owner thanked him heartily, saying, "You see, my mother-in-law runs the dining room."

A star-rating officer has to be ever on the alert, as in the case where the travel bureau man noticed a very large, low building going up in the midst of a barnyard. Local residents told him that the farmer was starting a motel in this structure, and threatening to put all competition out of business. Approaching the farmer, Ron introduced himself, and was greeted by a hearty thump on the back and howls of laughter.

The man explained in barely understandable English, "Those fellows down there are always complaining about my goats, so when I started to build this I told them it was going to be a motel. This is my new goat barn, sonny."

ERNEST EVANS
. . . "be kind to tourists."

ABOUT THREE YEARS ago, standards for the star rating were raised with the intent of bringing the formula in line with current standards of public acceptance. To bolster this program, Mr. Evans conceived the idea of the Tourist Service Clinic.

This system has since been adopted by several provinces. Teams of experts in various phases of hotel and motel management, food service, and related trades, go upon invitation of regional chambers of commerce to various localities and there hold two-day lecture and question sessions. These are for the benefit of all in the district who meet the tourist as a customer.

Volunteer panel members include Frank Seal who is director of the Washington State Motor Hotel Association (and who believes that what is good for any part of the Pacific Northwest is good for all of it); Nat Bailey, of the White Spot Restaurants in Vancouver; Harry Sewell, a decorating and furnishing consultant, and others of like stature, who give their time without pay to make B.C. a better place to travel. (The late "Dusty" Miller, Victoria restaurateur of Princess Mary's fame, was scheduled to take part in clinics.)

It is realized of course, that no operator can learn everything in two days, but once the incentive has been provided and the availability of further instruction pointed out, the wise man avails himself of it.

TRAINING FILMS are an important "show how" way of teaching for better preparation and reception for the tourist, and B.C. is working hard to improve their effectiveness.

"For instance," says Mr. Evans, "mosct of them used to be far too long. If you're demonstrating how to make a bed in three minutes, the film shouldn't take 20 minutes."

With 75,000 guest beds to be filled every night, making them properly and quickly is no small consideration. Neither is the training of waitresses. A special booklet written by Mrs. R. A. Denny, director of the food services department at the Alberta Institute of Technology and Art, is an example of the literature used in the constant effort to educate those who meet the travelling public to the fact that no service can be performed casually without spoiling what otherwise might be the best of impressions.

"A good waitress can do a lot to make a poor meal tolerable, but a poor waitress can ruin a good meal," says Mr. Evans.

CLOSELY ALLIED with classification and advisory services is the British Columbia Tourist Accommodation Directory, which is brought up to date each year from inspection reports, and published in early spring. Compilation is in the hands of Miss Isabel Lee, who is also in charge of the cardex system which keeps track of all accommodation in the province.

Relatively few British Columbians know about the directory, which in addition to listing every hotel and motel in B.C. with its star rating and information considered pertinent by the owner, provides quick reference to campsites, information centres, ferries, fish and game laws. It also gives road mileages, together with estimated driving times taken from RCMP experience.

IN ORDER to interest the tourist in visiting the province which has made so much preparation for him, the public relations office maintains both direct and written contact with those in a position to influence their fellow citizens in person or in writing about their travel choices.

Harry Harrod maintains constant contact with a multitude of general and specialized publications. When such a magazine as Time or the National Geographic (last year) or Esquire (this year) comes out with a section on B.C., it is to Harry, as well as to his own observations, that the travel editor or free lance writer looks for guidance in selecting points of interest, as well as in assuring accuracy. In addition to such publicity, this office assists in preparing the folders and booklets descriptive of the many places and aspects of B.C. likely to interest the tourist. Travel Bureau publicity is backed up by advertising in a variety of popular media: Newspapers, magazines, billboards and film.

RON MACDONNEL
. . . gives out the stars

To meet the potential American tourist on his home ground, Art Peers, who is jointly employed by the travel bureaus of B.C. and Alberta, travels eleven western states from his headquarters in San Francisco. He speaks to organizations, shows films, distributes literature, and answers countless questions. It is also his job to act as liaison officer in arranging conducted tours for officials of chambers of commerce, travel agencies, magazines and others in position to spread the word about B.C.

Pamphlet material prepared by the Travel Bureau goes out at the rate of more than 90 tons a year, all in small, carefully controlled quantities, so that none will be wasted and that obsolete booklets will not find their way into circulation when the picture they describe has changed. Responsibility for the handling and mailing of printed matter is shared between Mr. Evans' secretary, Mrs. Pat Campbell, and shipper Don Hamer.

TO GREET and guide the visitor after he arrives, a mobile reception centre has lately been added as an extension of the Victoria office. This well-equipped trailer office, stationed last year at Cranbrook, supplements the permanent reception centre at Douglas on the border. They are the responsibility of John Buckley who works out of Vancouver. The specific, regional information they are able to provide is credited with extending the stay of many a tourist by showing him additional points of both general and special hobby interest.

Information, of course, is probably the most familiar aspect of the B.C. Government Travel Bureau's work, and information is what the girls in the front office have plenty of. One might think to look at these pretty misses that they had been hired entirely as decoration. But that's not the case.

In a typical year, they will handle 65,000 inquiries ranging from requests for booklets to complicated questions about minerology or rare flora. Once a letter spoke in glowing terms of a fruit cake bought somewhere in Victoria 30 years before and inquired whether the same product was still available. Another was postscripted with a query as to the availability of bachelors in the capital city.

TO BE EQUIPPED to deal with the public's questions—in person, by letter, and by phone—the travel counsellors maintain contact with a staggering list of information sources. Besides receiving inquiries that involve practically every department in the provincial government, the federal government very often comes into the picture. Then there are the ferries, highways, parks, geographical characteristics of the entire province, 33 airlines, 17 steamship companies, eight railways, and 20 scheduled bus lines, plus other services ranging down to freight trucks licensed to carry two passengers in the front seat with the driver, all complicating the transportation picture. Complete familiarity with some hundreds of folders — the bureau's own and those produced by operators of accommodation and other tourist groups—is necessary, for these contain the answers to many of the questions most commonly asked.

In addition, due to the fact that the Travel Bureau was once a general information centre for the legislative buildings, inquiries come from all over the world that have no bearing on travel. Wherever possible, the travel counsellors answer these fully, courteously and promptly. That's how they make friends and influence people.

THIS WEEK'S ANAGRAM

(1) ACER PLUS SOU EQUALS ???
(2) PURE " COD " "
(3) SHIN " RAG " "
(4) SLED " AIM " "
(5) REED " NAG " "

Solution to today's anagrams are printed on Page 6.